

## Medical Princess 851

### Chapter 851 Two Drunk Princes Fight

To be honest, Shao Hua'an's wedding was not worthy of a guest like Chu Liuchen, who was a descendant of the royal family.

However, Prince Chen came and gave his blessings, which was owed to the fact that Shao Wanru was going to marry him. Unexpectedly, Prince Chen not only came here in person but also was accompanied by his two brothers. Because of this, the atmosphere of the wedding turned a bit solemn.

It should be pleasant that Prince Chen came to put up a front for his future wife, and the whole Duke Xing's Mansion was also happy for that.

Those princes were invited to the banquet. Making sure that they wouldn't be disturbed, they specially arranged a private table in a quiet place for them. And Shao Jing played hosts to the princes in person. Shao Hua'an also went to their table and drank a toast to them after he had done it to the other guests.

Chu Liuchen was in poor health, so no one dared to persuade him to drink. Prince Yue and Prince Zhou drank with Shao Jing. Everything was in harmony. So no one knew why there would be a scene when Shao Hua'an went there.

It seemed that Prince Yue and Prince Zhou both were unwilling to submit to each other. So they ignored the bridegroom and began to compete in drinking.

In the end, the two of them got drunk and fought against each other. The guests next to them wanted to stop the fight because they didn't dare to do nothing when seeing the royal members beating each other. However, it was not easy for them to stop the two, and even their servants joined in the fight later. Instantly, the inner court was in a mess. The only one who could stop the fight was Prince Chen, but he sat around far away and showed no intention of ending it.

Though, everyone knew that Prince Chen couldn't get close to the mess because it would be a big deal if he accidentally got hit.

When it came to a person they could ask for help, Duke Xing's Mansion could think of no one else but Prince Chen. However, the servant of Duke Xing's Mansion sent to ask for help was unable to get close to Prince Chen.

The servants of Prince Yue's Mansion were fighting against those of Prince Zhou's Mansion, while the people of Prince Chen, afraid that their master would be hurt, stood into a man-circle which Prince Chen was sitting inside, safe and sound.

Old Madam had no choice but to turn to Shao Wanru. She wanted Shao Wanru to persuade Chu Liuchen to cease the fight.

Old Madam didn't forget that Prince Chen came in person to deliver the betrothal gift at that time, which indicated that he cared much about his marriage. Whether it was due to Shao Wanru herself or Empress Dowager's order, Old Madam thought that it was worth a try to make use of his love to Shao Wanru. At such a moment, she had to try everything possible!

"Grandma, I'm afraid that I can't invite Prince Chen here, but I think I am able to send a message to him..." Shao Wanru hesitated for a moment and said. Apparently, she had little confidence.

It was reasonable, though. After all, she had not married Prince Chen yet and knew little about his personality. After thinking for a while, Old Madam made a concession and said, "Send a message to Prince Chen for me. Tell him that we need him to stop Prince Yue and Prince Zhou, and Duke Xing's Mansion will be grateful for that!"

At this point, Old Madam only hoped that no more people knew about the event. The guests outside were still there, but the situation inside had got worse. If it got around, not only the reputation of the royal family would be ruined but also the entire Duke Xing's Mansion would be implicated.

Shao Wanru was silent for a moment. She called Yujie and asked her to pass on the message.

With caution, Yujie came to the door of the main room and peeked inside. In fact, the two princes in the main room had been stopped by their servants, but they were still a little drunk, struggling to get rid of the restraint to have another fight.

Chu Liuchen held the teacup in his hand and looked down with his eyes as mild as water. He looked calm and leisured as if he didn't hear the noises around him.

"Master, Yujie is here!" Said Xiao Xuanzi. Standing on the side, he suddenly saw the servant girl looking around at the door.

"Call her over!" Chu Liuchen said.

Xiao Xuanzi answered, got out of the crowd, and led Yujie here.

Yujie stepped forward and bowed. She repeated what Old Madam had just said to Prince Chen. Then, a secret idea flashed in Chu Liuchen's mind. He sorted of his wide sleeves and stood up. It was just at the right time.

As he stood up and walked out of the circle, Xiao Xuanzi hurriedly caught up with his master and asked others of Prince Chen's Mansion to follow up.

The two groups were still quarreling with each other to back up their own masters. When Chu Liuchen's men forced their way in, Chu Liuyue and Chu Liuzhou kept trying to make trouble again.

Both of them drank so much that their faces and necks were red. They were still struggling to get rid of the control of their servants.

"Keep the two masters apart!" Chu Liuchen said coldly with a gloomy face, "Anyone who can't even hold his own master will lose his life!"

His words frightened the people of Prince Yue and Prince Zhou so much that they trembled. They had not intended to catch their masters with forces, but now they held them tightly with their hands and didn't dare to let go, for fear of provoking Prince Chen.

How could people who lived and worked in the palace not know that Prince Chen was not as gentle as he looked? No one dared to comfort him when he got angry.

“Hurry up! Are you going to wait until my master is hurt by the two princes?” Xiao Xuanzi shouted and glared at the two groups of people.

The two groups of servants were recovered at once and held their masters tightly. If Prince Chen was hurt, no one present would get away from it. Those people, who hadn’t been daring to use forces before, now tried their best to control their masters with all their strength.

The two princes were finally forced to sit back on their chairs, but they still glared at each other, as if the next minute they would pounce at each other to fight again if no one was keeping an eye on them.

It was obvious that they were still sozzled. The best way was to pour cold water over their heads to sober them up, but no one dared to do that because of their status.

“Bring two bowls of icy water for the two princes. The colder, the better,” said Chu Liuchen, who took a look at Shao Jing and Shao Hua’an standing on the side.

Shao Hua’an reacted fast and turned around to order his servant. Later, the servant brought two bowls of water and presented them to the two princes respectively.

“Feed them!” Chu Liuchen said in a cold voice and with an expression of indifference on his handsome face. He looked distant and no one dared to get close to him. Because of the tension he made, the people on both sides did as he said, though they had hesitated for a second.

Both Prince Cheng and Prince Zhou were forced to drink more than half of a bowl. They struggled and pushed off the people around them. Feeling uncomfortable, they took a few steps back, covering their mouths tightly.

It worked on Prince Yue first. The servants moved quickly to serve him when he vomited. Before long it worked on Prince Zhou too and he was also taken aside to vomit.

Intolerant of the messy room, Shao Jing asked someone to clean it up.

“Your Highness, what should we do now?” Shao Jing came up to Chu Liuchen and said with a worried face. It was impossible to cover it and people in the palace would definitely be informed.

“Duke Xing, aren’t you going to investigate the cause of the whole thing?” Chu Liuchen asked with cold eyes.

Shao Jing was stunned and didn’t react to Chu Liuchen’s question. He looked at Chu Liuchen in astonishment and didn’t understand what he meant.

“My eldest brother and second brother have always been self-disciplined men. How could they lose their control like that? Duke Xing, you’d better find out the reason, lest you have nothing to explain to Uncle the Emperor when he asks you about it,” Chu Liuchen said and then walked out. The smell in the room was a little strong, which was really not suitable for him to stay. “Find another flower hall and help Prince Yue and Prince Zhou there!”

“Your Highness, it has been ready long before. It’s just in the courtyard next here,” Shao Jing was stunned and then immediately replied.

All kinds of smells were filled with the room, which was indeed not a good place to talk.

Shao Jing asked Shao Hua'an to lead Chu Liuchen away first. Standing in the corridor for a while, he rushed to the wing room next and reported to Old Madam. It was so chaotic in the main room that it was not convenient for Old Madam to come over.

In the wing room, Old Madam and Shao Wanru were both waiting for the news. Yujie had come back to report to them once before and they also saw from the window that the two princes had been helped out. But Yujie couldn't explain what had exactly happened.

"How is it going?" Old Madam looked very anxious and asked as soon as she saw Shao Jing come in.

"I think the two princes will recover themselves..." That was what Shao Jing could say. He couldn't figure out the cause behind it. With his eyebrows frowned, he was still in surprise and confusion.

How could the two princes, who had always been decent in front of others, fight each other like that? What's worse, both of them had such a fierce fight that it made a bad impact on their reputation.

"What is going on? Why did the two princes fight against each other?" Old Madam pounded the table hard and questioned with anger. Duke Xing's Mansion must dig out the cause of it.

So they could explain when the Emperor asked them about it.

"Prince Chen had just said..." Shao Jing paused and glanced at his niece, who was just sitting around with her head lowered, and then he took his eyes back and continued, "We need to check whether something unusual has happened at the banquet because both of the two princes are self-disciplined people and would never act like that!"

Shao Jing was anxious and annoyed. He didn't want to get involved in the trouble between Prince Yue and Prince Zhou. His eldest daughter's plot had been a failure. Now, he shouldn't keep close to these two princes. As for his son's wedding, he had done nothing but just sent invitation cards to them according to etiquette. He didn't expect that the two princes would accept the invitation and come to the wedding.

Since they had come, Shao Jing had to receive them. However, it was out of his expectation again that the two princes, who had always been dignified in front of other people, would behave like that.

"Then ask someone to check it out!" Old Madam gritted her teeth and said.

"But... but... how could it be possible?" Shao Jing looked at Old Madam with his eyes widely open. He couldn't believe it! "Is it possible that someone of my mansion caused it?"

"No matter whether it is possible or not, we have to investigate it! If necessary... we can find someone to be..." Old Madam said with her eyes becoming spooky.

Old Madam paused, turned her glance at Shao Wanru, took a deep breath, and said with a soft face, "Wanru, you can go back first. I'll call you again if anything else happened. You must be tired. Go back to your courtyard and have a rest!"

Of course, it meant that she didn't want Shao Wanru to be present.

Shao Wanru was sensible. She stood up and bowed deeply to Old Madam and then to Shao Jing, after which she just left with Yujie.

She blinked her eyes to hide the inexplicable suspicion in her eyes. The mother and son had always been sneaky in her eyes. Now God knew what plots they were going to make...

### **Chapter 852 Could You Come With Me?**

Before Shao Wanru had come back to Duke Xing's Mansion, Madam Jiang and Old Madam were in charge of the affairs of the inner court. However, Old Madam aged, so everything was mainly handled by Madam of Duke Xing, Madam Jiang, who could be called as the master of the inner court of Duke Xing's Mansion.

It could be proved by the fact that she had even plotted against Third Madam.

Her nominal Second Uncle was also not simple. Not only did he know everything happening in the inner court, but also he took charge of the outer court. What's more, he meant a lot to the Emperor.

But everything she saw now had proved that Old Madam had always been the dominator of Duke Xing's Mansion. Whenever it came to something important, her Second Uncle would always negotiate it with Old Madam. That was to say, as long as it was a big deal, Old Madam's opinion would be asked.

No sooner had Madam Jiang left than Third Madam took full charge of the inner court, which should have something to do with Old Madam. She helped Third Madam get the position.

In a word, although it looked like that Old Madam didn't take charge, she had always been the big boss of Duke Xing's Mansion, including the inner court and the outer court.

Some decisions must be made by her!

Shao Wanru clenched the handkerchief in her hand tightly, which made her feel a sharp pain in her palm even through the handkerchief, and then slowly relaxed her hand. Only the sharp pain was left and it slowly slid into her heart.

She felt heavier and angrier because of the speculation in her mind.

If that was true, Old Madam was far more than a vicious human. Even vicious tigers would not eat their cubs, let alone human beings...

When she walked out of the courtyard, she found that Xiao Xuanzi was looking around under the tree in front of her. Seeing them, he hurriedly ran over with a smile.

"Fifth Miss!" Xiao Xuanzi said with a smile and bowed respectfully.

"What's the matter?" Shao Wanru asked in surprise. Shouldn't Xiao Xuanzi be with Chu Liuchen now?

"Master wants to know whether Fifth Miss was in charge of any affair today," asked Xiao Xuanzi with happiness. He looked very relaxed and casual, which was completely different from the expression he showed before Shao Jing and Old Madam.

"I was in charge of the tea room and helped deal with some other affairs. I had nothing to do with the drink and food!" Shao Wanru immediately understood what Chu Liuchen meant. She answered softly with her heart suddenly got softened.

According to Old Madam and Shao Jing's words just now, Shao Wanru knew that if the blame was put on Duke Xing's Mansion, they might find a scapegoat.

It couldn't be Old Madam herself, nor could it be Shao Jing or Shao Hua'an. Then it was hard to say who would be chosen except the three!

But one thing could be sure. The scapegoat wouldn't be a servant because no one would believe that a servant would be daring to do such a thing, even she or he was a favorite of masters.

The tea room, which was under the charge of Shao Wanru, was responsible for the insufficiency of the pastries they had prepared. They only prepared the sweet pastries they thought to be good, without thinking that some guests might dislike this kind of sweet or hate sweet food. However, it was also because of this mistake that the tea room didn't help make the sweet spring rolls for the kitchen.

Therefore, all the food served at the banquet had nothing to do with Shao Wanru.

Xiao Xuanzi immediately got her point. He rolled his eyes and said, "At that time, some pastries were indeed served to the princes, but they don't like sweet food, so they didn't eat them!"

Of course, the pastries were delivered by the servants. Two kinds were served. One of them smelt sweet and the other was a plate of spring rolls wrapped in bean paste. All princes didn't like sweets, so none of them even touched the pastries. The reason why Xiao Xuanzi remembered it so clearly was that he had advised his master to try some at that time. But Prince Chen didn't taste a bite. He also glanced at the other two masters, who never ate any of them. It could be seen that they all didn't like pastries.

Shao Wanru smiled slightly and understood what Xiao Xuanzi meant.

"Thanks, Xiao Xuanzi!" Yujie was very clever and hastened to thank him.

"Why thank me? Thank my master! Master is afraid that Fifth Miss will get involved in trouble. Although nothing serious will happen to you with my master's protection, it is no good to be linked with such trouble that might cause some unpleasant gossips," said Xiao Xuanzi, who was smiling like a happy flower. He was smart and left a good impression on the future princess by highlighting the power of his master in front of her.

What he said also showed Chu Liuchen's special protection for Shao Wanru.

"Thank your master!" Shao Wanru couldn't help smiling and said.

"Okay, I'll pass the message right away!" Xiao Xuanzi said happily, believing that his message would please his master. After bowing to Shao Wanru, he ran to another courtyard nearby.

As she thought, the courtyard Xiao Xuanzi went toward was the place where they would discuss what to do next. Rolling her watery eyes, she walked slowly toward the inner court. She couldn't intervene in the following things. Fortunately, Chu Liuchen was there.

Thinking of Chen Liuchen, she bit her lip gently, with a sense of peace in her heart. She was no longer panicky and helpless. Gone was the situation where she could only clench her teeth to bear everything.

"Fifth Sister, what happened?" Shao Caihuan came in a hurry and asked when she saw Shao Wanru.

She had just arrived as soon as she heard the news.

"Prince Yue and Prince Zhou had a fight. Grandma asked me to turn to Prince Chen for help," Shao Wanru said briefly.

"They, they fought? How could it be?" asked Shao Caihuan, whose face greatly changed into a nervous one.

"I don't know the reason either... Maybe they drank too much..." Shao Wanru gave a vague reply. She indeed didn't know the cause. "Grandma and Second Uncle are still talking about it inside. They asked me to go back first!"

She said and pointed at the courtyard where she had just come out.

"Everyone is inside there?" Shao Caihuan asked with panic and anxiety.

"Just Grandma and Second Uncle. The others have gone to somewhere else," Shao Wanru shook her head.

"Fifth Sister, why don't we go in and listen to their plan?" Shao Caihuan grabbed Shao Wanru's sleeve and said nervously.

Shao Wanru didn't expect such words. She looked at Shao Caihuan in astonishment. Old Madam and Shao Jing had made it clear. Obedient juniors should stay away from them at this time. How could she have such an idea?

Shao Caihuan didn't often behave to be a disobedient person, but she was abnormal today.

As if sensing Shao Wanru's doubt, Shao Caihuan hastened to explain, "My mother was the host of the banquet in the inner court today. Grandma will blame the problem on my mother. But she is innocent! No one would expect that the two princes would get drunk so easily after just a few cups of..."

"A few cups? How do you know that, Third Sister?" Shao Wanru asked sharply and glanced at Shao Caihuan's eyes which were full of panic.

"I... I don't know. I heard it from the person who came to report to me! They shouldn't get drunk like that... the two princes have always been in good health..." Shao Caihuan lowered her head and murmured with panic. It seemed that she was explaining or talking to herself.

"How many cups can get a man drunk if he is in poor health?" Shao Wanru asked thoughtfully.

Shao Caihuan was frightened and suddenly raised her head. She let go of the sleeve of Shao Wanru, who could feel that her hand had trembled.

She was in a serious panic.

"I... I have no idea..." She stammered and added with an embarrassed smile after seeing Shao Wanru's frowning eyebrows and the increasing doubts in her eyes. "I... I'm just afraid that my mother will be implicated in it. As you know, Grandma is never fond of my mother and she always thinks highly of Second Madam. If the matter can't be settled, it was hard to say..."

Saying that, Shao Caihuan was truly worried. What she meant was that she was afraid that Old Madam and Shao Jing would push the blame to Third Madam.

"Fifth Sister, can you come with me and listen? I... I have to explain it to them!" Shao Caihuan looked at Shao Wanru imploringly with her eyes turning wet. "My mother doesn't know anything. She has always been in bad health since that matter happened three years ago. Without Second Madam, she just forces herself to go on keeping the whole mansion well by herself. Most of the time she is unable to do it well as she wishes."

Shao Wanru looked at her calmly and stepped aside. "Third Sister, go by yourself. Second Uncle and Grandma are inside there!"

"Fifth Sister, I am scared if I am alone! Can... can you go together with me?"

Shao Caihuan didn't move her feet but looked at Shao Wanru with tears in her eyes and pleaded, "What if we don't go inside? We can listen to them in secret outside. I bet we won't be caught by Grandma and Second Uncle!"

"Grandma and Second Uncle have asked me to go out. If I go in again, they will think that I disobey their order on purpose. Third Sister, do you want me to be misunderstood? Go by yourself, please. If Grandma and Second Uncle ask me about you, I will say that I didn't mention anything to you, and they won't blame you. Your visiting will be considered as an accident!"

Shao Wanru shook her head calmly and refused Shao Caihuan.

What Shao Wanru said was more or less for Shao Caihuan's good. No matter Shao Caihuan decided to eavesdrop or rush in, it would be much better if she pretended not to know that Old Madam and Shao Jing didn't allow anyone to disturb them. It was a help for Shao Caihuan that Shao Wanru made a false testimony.

Shao Caihuan's face suddenly changed into a cold one. She took a step back with the panic and fear in her eyes gone. She looked at Shao Wanru coldly and said with disappointment, "Fifth Sister, I misjudged you. How can you be so cold-blooded!"

"What kind of person do you think I am, Third Sister?" Shao Wanru raised her eyebrows and asked.

"I thought that you were at least a warm-hearted and gentle girl. You were a good person! Although Second Madam has always wanted to frame you, my mother has always been very good to you, and I also want to be friendly with you. So I understand that you hate Second Madam, but why are you so indifferent and have no intention of helping my mother when she is in trouble?"

Shao Caihuan said with tears in her eyes, aggrieved and angry.

However, Shao Wanru's eyes became deep. She rolled her eyes with a trace of coldness flashing in them. It seemed that they could pierce through one's heart. She cast a cold glance at Shao Caihuan, who was frightened to step back subconsciously and avoided Shao Wanru's eyes. She felt a little guilty...

### **Chapter 853 Grandmother, Let's Tell Them the Truth!**

"Third Sister, I think you have misread me. I have never been a good person!" Shao Wanru said coldly.



"You..." Shao Caihuan looked at Shao Wanru in a daze, with her words stuck in her throat. She slightly opened her mouth but couldn't say a word.

It shouldn't have been like this. Shouldn't Shao Wanru explain this and then go in with her?

"Third Sister, actually, I'm neither a nice person nor a stupid one. So... you think yourself wise to do something... but you'd better not do that in front of me. You just waste your strength on me. Grandmother will definitely push someone out this time. I don't know if it will be Third Aunt or not. It has nothing to do with me!"

Shao Wanru slightly raised the corner of her mouth, but her eyes were still cold. The glimmer of smile did not appear in her eyes at all, and it even made people feel a little sarcastic.

Shao Caihuan subconsciously opened her mouth and wanted to say something, but she didn't know where to start. She could only watch Shao Wanru leave.

"Miss... What should we do? We..." Her servant girl stammered.

"Let's go in!" Shao Caihuan gritted her teeth and wiped her tears under the veil with a handkerchief. She made a determined effort in her heart, but inexplicably felt a sense of guilt and fear.

When had Shao Wanru become so horrible? Why was Shao Wanru quite different from what she had thought? Hadn't Fifth Sister always been nice to her? Shao Wanru had always been respectful to her too, but why was Shao Wanru different from her previous impression?

Fifth Sister shouldn't be like this. Could it be that she had known something? An idea suddenly appeared in her mind. This made her stop after taking a few steps, and she looked at Shao Wanru's back in horror. In a short while, Shao Wanru had walked to the door of a Moon Cave ahead and then slowly disappeared from her sight.

Her fingers couldn't help trembling. When she had been stiff just now, she had not noticed her cold fingers, but now she felt timid and extremely cold.

Shao Wanru was just like what Shao Caihuan felt about her. If... if it was true... she would have never been very nice to her, let alone simply speak for her.

Shao Caihuan felt as if someone poured a basin of cold water on her head, which made her feel bitterly cold in her heart. Not only her heart but also her whole body was uncontrollably shaking, and her face was as pale as snow.

"Was I... cheated?" Shao Caihuan thought.

"Caihuan?" A puzzled voice came from behind. Shao Caihuan turned around stiffly and saw Shao Jing looking at her with displeasure. She hurriedly bowed to salute, "Second Uncle!"

"Why are you here?" Shao Jing looked at this Third niece and asked. He still frowned tightly, which could tell that he was in a bad mood.

"We heard that something happened here, so Mother asked me to come and have a look. She did not feel well, and she went to lie in bed for a while!" Shao Caihuan hurriedly restrained her mind and explained.

"Your grandmother is inside. Go back with her. You can't intervene in this matter!" Shao Jing said coldly. After saying this, he ignored Shao Caihuan and turned to the courtyard nearby.

Shao Caihuan didn't walk in until she had stood stiffly at the door for a while. Now she could only take it one step at a time and meet her Grandmother first. Besides, there were only few people knowing this matter, so it was impossible to put the blame on her...

The matter that the two princes had fought violently failed to be concealed, and it was slowly spread to the guests outside. Those guests who had not left yet immediately began to talk about this.

Now there was only Third Master of Duke Xing's Mansion entertaining guests outside, and the other masters were not there. This also made the guests outside more convinced that this matter was true.

Someone went to ask Third Master Shao about this, but Third Master Shao really knew nothing about it. He even waved his hand generously and said, "It is impossible. How can it be possible?"

Seeing that he answered casually, everyone was rather in doubt. But at this time, someone saw how Prince Yue and Prince Zhou left. The two princes' faces still had bruises and their clothes were in a mess with traces of tearing, which obviously meant that they had fought each other. Moreover, the two princes remained cold faces all the way. Although they came out together, they didn't look at each other.

Indeed, there was something wrong between them.

After the two princes had left, others saw Duke Xing, who came late, and First Young Master, who had gotten married today. Although they talked gently, their awkward expressions obviously showed that something had happened.

Everyone sensibly took their leave one by one. Only some close relatives and friends were still waiting for the dinner party in the evening. After entrusting them to his Third Brother, Shao Jing took Shao Hua'an to Old Madam's Chuntang Courtyard.

They had asked Old Madam to help inquire about the matter in the inner courtyard before, so they went there to see whether Old Madam had found out something. As for Shao Hua'an's bridal chamber, Shao Hua'an had also asked someone to inform the newly married Madam that he had something important to deal with here and would go to see her later.

When the father and son came over, Old Madam was sitting in the room with a cold face. Sitting next to her, Third Madam lowered her head slightly and dared not to breathe too much, looking very nervous. She had been in poor health, but now she looked paler than usual, almost as weak as paper.

Shao Caihuan stood behind her mother and lowered her head tightly, making her expression unable to be seen clearly.

"Mother, how is your investigation going? Does it have anything to do with our mansion?" After saluting to Old Madam, Shao Jing sat down beside her and immediately asked anxiously.

Shao Hua'an looked at Old Madam, whose face was as pale as paper, and also sat down on the other side of Shao Jing.

"All rascals!" Old Madam pounded the table heavily with her hand.

Third Madam next to her couldn't sit still anymore. She plopped to kneel down and cried with her hands covering her face. "Mother, it is all my fault. Because of my poor health, my management has been loose recently. Although I've assigned some things to Third Miss and Fifth Miss this time, I still felt a little tired, so I took a short break. I didn't expect that it would get into trouble!"

"You evil creature!" Old Madam was exasperated, heavily pounding the armrest of the chair.

"Mother, do you mean that our mansion is really related to this matter?" Shao Jing looked at his sister-in-law, who was kneeling on the ground, and then looked at Old Madam and asked coldly.

Originally, even if this matter had nothing to do with Duke Xing's Mansion, he would still be rebuked by Emperor. If it was really related, Emperor would definitely punish him. Shao Jing could not help but break out in a cold sweat on his back. He looked at Third Madam kneeling on the ground, with more anger in his eyes.

"Yes, it does have something to do with our mansion!" Old Madam said angrily, "It is said that someone sent a pot of medicinal wine to several Princes. The medicinal effect is not very strong. Actually, it is not particularly powerful wine, but there are some tonic components in it. The supervisor told her that and she thought it was good, so she sent it to those Princes!"

"Sending them medicinal wine with tonics in it?" Shao Jing's face changed greatly. He stared at Third Madam kneeling on the ground in astonishment and said in a sharp voice, "What's going on? Who wants to hurt Prince Chen?"

Since it was medicinal wine, it didn't matter for common people to drink it. It would still be fine even if the wine was more alcoholic. But Prince Chen was not included in these common people. If Prince Chen drank a little, no one knew what would happen. If he vomited blood on the spot or it was life-threatening, the whole Duke Xing's Mansion would be buried with him.

Shao Jing was not stupid. He immediately thought of Prince Chen who had come here today, and Prince Chen was also the most likely to come here. When he had sent the betrothal gift last time, Prince Chen had come here to show that he attached great importance to Shao Wanru. When Duke Xing's Mansion held a wedding, he probably would come here to show his support and help keep up appearances.

"Second Uncle, I didn't know Prince Chen was also here. The supervisor said that several Princes came over and he asked whether we could prepare some wine and medicinal wine was also fine. So I agreed and sent over the treasured medicinal wine in our mansion. I thought it was not a big deal, and the medicinal wine was not very alcoholic. Even I used to drink a cup of it occasionally!"

Third Madam cried on the floor and explained.

"You... you..." Old Madam pointed at Third Madam with her fingers and said angrily, "Can you compare yourself with Prince Chen? Your body can bear this, but it doesn't mean that Prince Chen can. Fortunately, Prince Chen is fine this time. Otherwise... otherwise..." Thinking of that, Old Madam shivered and sweated all over her back.

The current situation had been the best. Fortunately, Prince Chen was not fond of drinking alcohol.

"Mother, Big Uncle, I really didn't know it would turn out like this!" Third Madam could not stop crying.

Old Madam was so angry that she could not say a word. Shao Jing looked at Third Madam kneeling on the ground with cold and disgusted eyes. Shao Caihuan did not dare to move at all, only feeling that her whole body was numb. The current situation was totally different from what she had imagined. How could it be like this? And why had it been like this?

Shao Hua'an coughed in a low voice and said, "Third Aunt, you can get up first. Since this matter happened like this, we have to come up with a plan! Come on, help Third Aunt stand up. Third Aunt is not well, so she can't kneel too long and even get hurt!"

Looking at Old Madam's expression and seeing that Old Madam nodded slightly, an old maid hurried over to help Third Madam up and helped her sit down on a chair aside.

"Grandmother, it is impossible for us to conceal this matter now!" Shao Hua'an looked at Old Madam, who was sitting in the main seat, and said.

"Then what should we do?" Old Madam said angrily. In the current situation, even though she had weathered notable storms, she felt that those were not as dangerous as it was this time.

Originally she had not liked the daughter-in-law of Third Branch, and now she couldn't like her at all. As expected, this daughter-in-law was not presentable and couldn't take responsibility. Her granddaughter-in-law was more reliable, so the affairs of the inner courtyard seemingly had to be managed by someone else.

"Grandmother, let's tell the truth! The supervisor did what Third Aunt had promised, so it should be easy to find out. If we deal with this group of people, it will arouse Emperor's anger in the end. So we'd better gather them together and wait for Emperor's servants to come over. Then we can send them all to the palace and let Emperor investigate as he wants!"

Shao Hua'an thought for a moment and said. At present, there was no better way than this to deal with this matter.

Hearing this, Old Madam and Shao Jing nodded repeatedly. They looked at each other and also felt that this was the best way to deal with this matter now. They couldn't make Emperor suspect Duke Xing's Mansion, so Duke Xing's Mansion had to do nothing at the moment and just wait what would happen next!

"No... It can't be like this. Grandmother, we can't do this!"

#### **Chapter 854 Why Can't It Be Me!**

Shao Caihuan gripped the handkerchief tightly in her hands. She struggled to suppress the panic in her heart and said anxiously.

Shao Jing frowned. He ignored her.

Old Madam's expression became gloomy and she was about to lose her temper. Shao Hua'an was relatively calm. He looked at Shao Caihuan and asked, "Third sister, why do you say that? Is there any secret in it that could not be known by others?"

"Third Girl, what's the matter?" Old Madam also heard something strange so she asked sharply.

Shao Caihuan's hands were trembling, and then her whole body was trembling. She struggled to suppress the panic in her heart, gritted her teeth and said, "Grandma, what if the servants involve Mother in this matter? What should Mother do?"

Speaking of this, Shao Caihuan cried, "Grandma, my mother didn't want to meddle in the affairs of the mansion at first. You know, she is in poor health, so she is not capable of managing these affairs. If it weren't because you asked her to manage them again and again, my mother would only need to recuperate now. How could such a thing happen?"

When the Third Madam heard her daughter's words and thought that she really didn't want to take over these affairs at that time, she felt that she should not have faced this disaster. She felt so sad that she lowered her head to wipe her tears with a handkerchief.

She did refuse several times at that time though she pretended that she did not want to be in charge of the mansion. But now, she felt that she really didn't want to take over the mansion at first. It was the Old Madam who forced her to do so.

The more she thought about it, the more wronged she felt. She felt that she had suffered the disaster which should not be endured by her. How could such a thing happen to her if she was recuperating in her own room?

"Three years ago, after I was hit by a carriage, I didn't recover very well. So my health had long been ruined. If it was not that no one in the mansion took charge, I wouldn't... wouldn't interfere in internal affairs... Mother, I would rather die three years ago than stay alive now. After all, I could have a good reputation."

The Third Madam sobbed.

Shao Caihuan turned around and hugged her. She cried with her.

The crying of them made all the people in the room frown, not to say Shao Hua'an who was getting married today. Now the mother and daughter cried as if someone was dead. It was impossible for him to be happy.

If it weren't for his good manner, he would have lost his temper.

Shao Jing's and Old Madam's expression was very gloomy. The Third Madam got injured in the accident three years ago because of Madam Jiang's plot. From this perspective, the second branch owed the third branch.

"Sister-in-law, we've told about my niece's marriage!" Shao Jing couldn't help coughing to remind the Third Madam not to forget that he had promised to give Shao Jie'er's marriage to Shao Caihuan as compensation for the third branch.

The Third Madam lowered her voice of crying and turned to look at her daughter. Seeing that although her daughter's face was covered with a veil, her eyes were red and swollen because of crying, she became sadder. "Mother, Second uncle, if you need someone to take responsibility for this matter, I... I would take it... But everyone knows my illness. If someone wants to hurt Prince Chen, he must have known this!"

For the sake of her daughter's marriage, the Third Madam had to give in, but she also left ground for her to retreat. Everyone in the mansion knew that she was in poor health and it was impossible for her to manage everything with such a body. She had to let someone manage many things and later report to her.

The wedding banquet today was not over yet, and some things had not been reported yet, so she might not know something.

This was indeed a fact. If her daughter had not told her what had happened just now, she would not have known that such a disaster had happened in the mansion.

"Mother..." Shao Caihuan cried griefily, and her tears wet the veil on her face.

"Well, you two would better go back first. This matter must be investigated, but it has to be done according to the Emperor's order. Our mansion can't dominate it, and I can't promise you that all is well!" Shao Jing waved his hand impatiently and said, feeling increasingly annoyed in his heart.

With so many things to deal with, he didn't want to see the mother and daughter crying here.

Old Madam nodded and did not want the Third Madam to be here any more. She could not do anything right. Letting her stay here would not be a good thing!

Shao Caihuan still wanted to say something, but Old Madam's servants had already helped the Third Madam up indisputably. So she had to go out with them.

After they arrived in the courtyard of the Third Madam and the servants of Old Madam also left, the Third Madam waved her hand to ask other servant girls and old maids to leave. Only the Third Madam and Shao Caihuan stayed in the room.

"Tell me, what has happened?" The Third Madam wiped her tears, looked at Shao Caihuan with red eyes and said seriously.

She was in poor health, but she was not stupid.

"Mother..." Shao Caihuan murmured to her, "I... I don't know what you are talking about!"

"You don't know? Fine... Well, you still intend to hold out on me now. Do you know that if something really happens to Prince Chen, all the people of Duke Xing's Mansion would die with him?" The Third Madam was so angry that she said it with great rage. She was in poor health, so most of the arrangement was done by Shao Caihuan.

It was not that she wanted Shao Caihuan to deal with this matter, but that Shao Caihuan took the initiative to say that she wanted to learn how to manage these things. On the one hand, it could help her mother recover well; on the other hand, she wanted to practice.

Thinking that she would marry into Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion in the future, if she could learn to manage the mansion, she might obtain a higher status in Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion. It was even possible that because of Duke Xing's Mansion, she could become the Princess of Commandery Prince Qing. Thus, the Third Madam let her do it.

She had asked her and Shao Wanru for help, but in fact, Shao Caihuan had taken charge of most of the important things.

Now that such a big mistake had been made, others might not know it, but how could the Third Madam not know it? If someone had plotted this matter, the first person would be Shao Caihuan. Moreover, her expression was very abnormal just now.

The reason why the Third Madam softened her attitude and took responsibility of this matter was also because of Shao Caihuan.

Now that there were no outsiders here, the Third Madam should ask her and make it clear.

"Mo... Mother..." Shao Caihuan started to stammer.

"If you don't want to piss me off, tell me the truth!" The Third Madam patted the armrest of the chair heavily and said seriously.

Her words were so harsh that Shao Caihuan couldn't stand still anymore. She knelt down with a thud and walked to the Third Madam on her knees. She put her hands on the Third Madam's knees, and cried out, "Mother..."

As soon as she called out, she couldn't help crying again. She cried and said, "Mother, I don't want to marry into Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion. If I must marry into one mansion, I'm willing to marry into Prince Chen's Mansion and serve him with Fifth Sister!"

These words had been suppressed in her heart for a long time. At this time, when she said it in front of the Third Madam, she choked with sobs and could not stop crying.

The Third Madam was stunned and even looked at Shao Caihuan in horror. Her lips trembled and she felt that she couldn't breathe. She covered her chest hard with her hands.

Seeing that the situation was bad, Shao Caihuan hurriedly stood up, cried, and patted the Third Madam's back while saying anxiously, "Mother, mother, don't be anxious. Please relieve and relax yourself!"

Finally, the Third Madam got back to normal. When she recovered, she slapped Shao Caihuan hard, which made Shao Caihuan take a few steps back and almost fall down.

"Mother..." Shao Caihuan stared at the Third Madam with tears in her eyes.

"Do... do you want to piss me off? Is it so easy for you to marry into Prince Chen's Mansion? You don't want to marry into Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion? Your father even pleaded your Second Uncle for you. Otherwise, do you think that you could marry into Commandery Prince Qing's Mansion? In your current state, who is willing to marry you? Commandery Prince Qing even may not want to marry you, how could Prince Chen be willing to do so!"

The Third Madam was so angry that she almost fainted. She had never known that her daughter had such a delusion, and she even intended to turn this delusion into reality.

Who was Prince Chen? How could he be the same as Commandery Prince Qing? He was the beloved person of the Empress Dowager and the Emperor. How could he be plotted against by others?

“Mother... as long as I serve Prince Chen well, he will be willing to marry me. Besides, I don’t want to be his Princess, and the Princess is my Fifth Sister. Fifth Sister has a good character and has always got along well with me. If... if we two serve him together... isn’t it better? Prince Chen is noble, and it is impossible for him to only marry Fifth Sister. Since he would also marry others, why can’t it be me? At least, Fifth Sister and I are on the same side!” Shao Caihuan cried and said.

The Third Madam took a deep breath, suppressed the rage in her heart, and then asked slowly, “When did you come up with this idea?”

“When I... I saw Prince Chen send betrothal gifts to Fifth Sister!” Shao Caihuan wiped her tears and said truthfully.

Since she had talked about the start, the rest was much simpler.

“You have fallen in love with Prince Chen for so long? Why... why don’t you tell me!” The third Madam said exasperatedly. She really wanted to knock her daughter’s head open to see what she was thinking.

If she could marry Prince Chen easily, even if he was in poor health, there would be so many girls striving to marry him. How could this opportunity fall on Shao Wanru?

Moreover, Prince Chen even gave her the betrothal gifts in person. Even if he did not love Shao Wanru so much, he must not dislike Shao Wanru, and he might like her.

None of the other girls had such status.

“Mother, I... I really don’t dare to say it...” Shao Caihuan cried loudly, and she cried so hard that she almost couldn’t speak clearly.

She really didn’t dare to say it. She could only flatter Shao Wanru secretly and wanted Shao Wanru to talk about this. She even thought about promising Shao Wanru that after they married into Prince Chen’s Mansion together, she would not fight for anything. She just wanted to accompany Prince Chen quietly and help Shao Wanru fight for his favor when she needed help.

As an elder sister and the daughter of the legal wife, she had made such a great concession and thought for her Fifth Sister considerately. Shao Caihuan felt that she was not wrong.

Even so, she didn’t dare to tell the Third Madam the truth explicitly.

Seeing that her daughter was still so stubborn, the Third Madam stopped beating around the bush. She wiped her tears with a handkerchief and said with a gloomy expression, “Now tell me the truth. Who came up with this idea for you? Who wanted to secretly do harm to our third branch and let us die? Is it your Fifth Sister?”

### **Chapter 855 Did You Drug the Drink?**

Third Madam looked very gloomy as she said it. How could she not understand her daughter? The only thing she could do was to please Shao Wanru.

She had suspected her daughter since several days ago. In the last few days, Shao Caihuan had visited Piaoyun Courtyard a lot often. Third Madam was very confused why she became so friendly with Shao



Wanru at that time. Now she was more surprised by such a reason, and it also explained why Shao Caihuan kept showing weakness to Shao Wanru.

Thinking that her daughter, as a pampered daughter of her lineal descent, should have such a disgraceful thought and even tried to please her cousin sister for it, Third Madam felt sorry, sad, and also angry.

If nothing had happened to her daughter in the imperial palace at that time, how could her daughter end up being a concubine? Even if she would be a concubine of a prince, Third Madam was not happy for her. Her girl was a daughter of the legal wife, so she should be a legal wife too instead of a concubine who had to ingratiate other women.

“Mother...” Shao Caihuan whispered.

“Do you intend to say nothing so that you can protect that person, and then just see your parents and sister become his scapegoats?” Third Madam became angrier.

“No, no! Mother, I was about to tell you that day when I wanted to come and see you, but I happened to meet Sister Zhao...” Shao Caihuan cried and explained. She didn’t dare to cover it anymore. At first, she didn’t plan to say it out because there was no practical witness to prove it.

She had wanted to tell Third Madam and ask her for help that day when she was ignored by Prince Chen. Unexpectedly, she met a servant girl, who was from Minister Zhao’s Mansion. To be more precise, she was Zhao Xiran’s servant girl. The servant girl told Shao Caihuan that her master wanted to see her outside at night and discuss something important with her. Zhao Xiran also said that she could help Shao Caihuan solve the problem that bothered her most.

Shao Caihuan was dubious about it. Thinking that Zhao Xiran would soon marry into Duke Xing’s Mansion and become her sister-in-law, so she wouldn’t set her up, Shao Caihuan decided to go out and meet her that night with a dubious attitude.

It was Third Madam who was in charge of the mansion, so no one dared to stop Shao Caihuan from going out.

When she met Zhao Xiran, they didn’t talk about anything else. But Zhao Xiran said that she had seen through Shao Caihuan’s thoughts before, and even gave her advice.

She advised Shao Caihuan to stop thinking about Prince Chen, because it was impossible to get a man like Prince Chen by just admiring him. Among all Misses in the capital city, there were so many of them who didn’t mind Prince Chen’s bad health at all. But none of them could catch his eyes.

In other words, it indicated that Prince Chen’s Mansion was clean and Shao Wanru would live a happy life after marrying Prince Chen. Even if one or two more co-consorts lived there, it would be still cleaner and more pleasant than those mansions in which lived a lot of wives and concubines. They looked glamorous, but actually, they suffered a lot and felt depressed.

Shao Caihuan had been interested in Prince Chen. And after hearing Zhao Xiran’s advice, her passion for him became even more.

As a woman, how could she not wish that her beloved just belong to no one but her? She couldn't change the fact that Shao Wanru would be Princess Chen, but it would be good enough for her if she was the only concubine.

So instead of being persuaded, Shao Caihuan became even more thirsty.

Then Zhao Xiran didn't ask more about it. Instead, she talked to Shao Caihuan about her marriage. Zhao Xiran had always been very natural without no one else around, even when she was talking about her wedding. Knowing that it was Third Madam who was in charge of Duke Xing's Mansion, she especially thanked Shao Caihuan.

Moreover, she asked Shao Caihuan not to think of anything evil. If something happened between Prince Chen and her at the wedding, Third Madam would also get in a dilemma.

She also warned Shao Caihuan that Prince Chen was in weak health, so never allow anyone to toast to him. Others may not get drunk, but Prince Chen would definitely do. At that time, everyone would be implicated if something unhappy happened.

These suggestions sounded very reasonable and considerate, and they sounded all for Third Madam's good. But in Shao Caihuan's ears, their meanings had totally changed.

Prince Chen could not bear alcohol! Others could, but he couldn't!

If Prince Chen was drunk, she could get a chance to serve him. At that time, if something unexpected happened, Prince Chen had to give an explanation to her family and take the responsibility for what he had done to her. After all, she was also a legitimate daughter of Duke Xing's Mansion.

Moreover, she would be just taking care of Prince Chen. What happened next was beyond her control.

Even Shao Wanru would have to agree...

With such a beautiful dream in her mind, Shao Caihuan returned to Duke Xing's Mansion. That night, she didn't sleep well because she thought about it over and over again. The more she thought about it, the more she believed it was practical. If it worked, she would be Prince Chen's woman, though she would just be a co-consort. Anyway, she had done nothing wrong.

There was nothing wrong with just helping her mother to take care of a guest of high status. It was just an accident.

Therefore, on that day, she secretly asked Third Madam to serve alcohol to that table. She only explained that there was a noble guest but didn't mention that Prince Chen was also at that table.

If her mother knew that Prince Chen was there, she would be hesitant. Everyone knew Prince Chen's health condition, and no one dared to serve him with the drink.

After Shao Caihuan's confession, Third Madam was so angry that her face changed from blue to pale. Although she had always been at a disadvantage since she dealt with Madam Jiang for so many years, she reversed the situation by what had happened three years ago. So it could be seen that she was not a stupid woman. Hearing Shao Caihuan's words, she instantly realized it was Zhao Xiran's plot.

She was so angry that she wanted to rush to the wedding room and question Zhao Xiran.

As an unmarried woman, she should dare to plot against the third branch! What did she mean by doing it?

However, apart from Shao Caihuan's verbal testimony, there was no other evidence to prove it. What's more, every word Zhao Xiran said was persuading words, and they seemed to make sense in any aspect.

"You... you stupid girl, how can you be so stupid!" Third Madam fingered out to poke Shao Caihuan's forehead and scolded, "Why did you think that she was kind? If something really happens, and Duke Xing's Mansion is not to blame, our third branch will have to take responsibility. The second branch won't cover us, neither will Old Madam!"

Third Madam started to feel aggrieved. Since she married into Duke Xing's Mansion so many years ago, she had been neglected. And she felt increasingly ashamed in front of Old Madam because she had no sons but two daughters. It had taken her a lot to climb up to such a position and she had just built up the foundation. Now, she was stuck into another dilemma due to what her daughter had done.

"Mother, Mother! What should we do now?" Shao Caihuan also realized that she had made trouble and asked with her body trembling.

"Did you drug the drink?" Third Madam calmed down and asked. It was not the time to blame Zhao Xiran, so she forced herself to calm down.

"No, Mother! I didn't. I just asked someone to send the drink! I didn't dare to do anything else!" Shao Caihuan cried. Her original intention was to get Prince Chen drunk and then get close to him with some excuses. She was too timid to drug others even if someone asked her to do so. After all, there were two other princes present.

Third Madam breathed a sigh of relief. Luckily, her daughter was not that stupid. Otherwise, the third branch would not be able to get away from it this time. At least, now they could salvage the situation.

"The two princes won't fight for no reason. They must have been drugged. Of course, it is the best that you didn't do it. Zhao Xiran was the one who abetted you. If there was someone else who had known what you would do, it must be Zhao Xiran. But it's useless for you to point her out now," Third Madam calmly analyzed.

"Then what should we do, Mother?" Shao Caihuan was in a daze after being frightened.

"Go to your Fifth Sister and explain to her," Third Madam took a deep breath and made a decision.

Third Madam was convinced that Old Madam could not help her daughter. Moreover, it was said that she attached great importance to her granddaughter-in-law. So Old Madam would not believe any hostile word about Zhao Xiran, so it would be better to say nothing to her.

At this time, Third Madam wished Zhao Xiran was dead. It was definitely not a good omen that so many bad things happened on the day when she just married into the mansion. She could not get Zhao Xiran involved in Shao Caihuan's trouble, but she could do something else.

The third branch wasn't easygoing either.

Third Madam swore in secret that as long as Shao Caihuan's problem was settled, she would punish Zhao Xiran. Her husband, the eldest legitimate grandson of Old Madam, was not the heir of a duke yet.

It was still undecided who would be the Heir of Duke Xing! Now, Zhao Xiran had started to cut in the affairs of the mansion, as if she were the future wife of the Heir of Duke Xing's Mansion. Didn't she even realize that she was just a new daughter-in-law? Did she think that she had been equal to Madam of Duke Xing, Madam Jiang?

"No, Mother! I won't go. I... I don't know what to say!" Shao Caihuan cried with shame and guilt.

"You don't know what to say? And you knew how to make trouble? If you are not going to explain to Shao Wanru, now you can expect that the second branch will push all the blame on your father and me. At that time, your father and I will be in jail as the scapegoats, and there will only be you and your younger sister left in the mansion. Let's see who will treat you as masters."

Third Madam had to give her a heavy slap in the face, with an assumption of serious situations they would face.

Shao Caihuan was scared to tremble, with tears shedding like rain. She couldn't bear such a consequence. If something happened to her parents, she would end her life to make amends. At that time, her family would be destroyed, and there would be no future.

"I'm going to find Fifth Sister, Mother!" Shao Caihuan had to agree.

"Yes. Go and find your Fifth Sister and tell her the cause and effect of this matter. You have to make Zhao Xiran's words clear. As for your wishful thinking, you must repent for it and you can't hide it. You are not allowed to think about Prince Chen anymore. Otherwise, not to mention Prince Chen won't forgive you, your Fifth Sister won't let you go!"

Third Madam was smarter than her daughter. The Fifth Girl, who was the last one to enter Duke Xing's Mansion, in no way was an ordinary girl. If she was merely an ordinary Miss from an aristocratic family, she would have been killed by Madam Jiang before she entered Duke Xing's Mansion. How could it be as possible as now she lived in the mansion safe and sound?

Not only did she come back to Duke Xing's Mansion, but also Madam Jiang was expelled. Third Madam did not believe it was just a coincidence. She had been trying to make friends with Shao Wanru before. And she had also sent Infanta Qinghua's dowries back to her in order to ingratiate Shao Wanru.

"Okay, I'll go now!" Shao Caihuan had to agree with tears in her eyes.

#### **Chapter 856 Go to Piaoyun Courtyard and Ask for Help**

No matter how much she was fond of Prince Chen, she had forgotten it all now in such a panic.

Shao Caihuan also found that she had underestimated it—thinking that with such a good chance, she would have made it as she had wished.

She hadn't expected it would end up this way. The third branch might even lose their lives.

Third Madam asked her to dry the tears and ordered her old maid to accompany Shao Caihuan to Piaoyun Courtyard to see Shao Wanru.

In Piaoyun Courtyard, Shao Wanru, frowning, was thinking of what had happened today. "It is odd. Very uncommon!"

Why did Zhao family present a pastry recipe? Moreover, everyone in the kitchen thought the pastry was good and none of them had an objection. It was really strange.

If there was something wrong with the pastries and she was to blame, then who would benefit from it? It was destined that Third Madam could not do everything in person due to her weak health. Did any of those unmarried Misses in the mansion want to intervene in the affairs?

Shao Jie'er? Unlikely! Anyway, she was just a daughter of a concubine, who was totally unqualified to do that, especially under the situation where there were so many legitimate daughters in the mansion.

Shao Caihuan? Given her current situation, it seemed that she couldn't even though she had such an intention. Shao Wanru tended to believe that she, as a woman who was disfigured, would devote herself to repairing her face rather than think of such a big plot.

Shao Cailing? Less possible!

So who had secretly plotted against her? It couldn't be Zhao Xiran, the new member who had just entered the mansion, could it?

Although Shao Wanru thought it unlikely, she decided to keep it in her heart for the time being. She was more cautious rather than being suspicious. In her last life, she died like a dog and even had no idea who had killed her. If she didn't keep in caution in her second life, she might end up in the same way again.

"Miss, Third Miss comes to see you! She is crying," Qu Le came in and reported in a hurry.

Shao Wanru thought for a second and nodded, "Let her come in!"

Qu Le went to lead Shao Caihuan in. Shao Wanru's eyes flashed with a trace of suspicion, "She might come for what had happened today, at such time."

Shao Caihuan's behavior today had indicated that she must have something to do with what had happened in the outer court.

Yujie lifted the curtain at the door for Shao Caihuan, who walked in and was crying, and put it down after she had been inside. Shao Wanru stood up and said with a mild voice, "Third Sister, please sit down!"

Anyway, Shao Caihuan was her third cousin.

"Fifth Sister, please help me and my mother!" Shao Caihuan knelt with her two knees down.

Shao Wanru nimbly turned around and avoided facing her kneeling, and she frowned and said with displeasure, "What do you mean, Third Sister? You are my elder sister and the Third Miss of Duke Xing's Mansion. How can you kneel to me? If someone sees it, they will misunderstand that I am bullying you! Third Sister, just tell me what you want. You don't need to kneel."

Shao Wanru was angry so her words were a little bit harsh.

Shao Caihuan knew that she couldn't infuriate Shao Wanru anymore at this time. So she stopped crying and Qu Le came to help her up. She stood up, wiped off her tears, and said, "Fifth Sister, I promise I meant no harm. I just ordered a servant to serve the princes with some drink of high alcohol

concentration! Not much but a little! And it wouldn't get anyone too drunk except for Prince Chen... But I thought that he would be fine after taking a nap!"

"Third Sister, do you have a grudge against Prince Chen? So you want to hurt him?" Shao Wanru asked in a cold voice.

"No..." Shao Caihuan still wanted to justify herself.

"Then, why do you want to get him drunk, Third Sister?" Shao Wanru questioned her, not leaving her much time to hesitate.

"I... I... planned to..." Shao Caihuan stammered. It was difficult for her, an unmarried Miss, to say out her disgraceful plot, especially with Shao Wanru's two servant girls in the same room. For a moment, she blushed with shame and guilt.

"Third Sister, you'd better make it clear to me now. It is beyond my ability to guess it. If Empress Dowager in the palace knows what you have done to Prince Chen, I am afraid that you may not even have time to explain a word!"

Shao Wanru's long eyelashes fluttered, and her eyes became colder and colder. Her delicate face seemed to be covered with frost.

Though Shao Wanru was a few years younger than Shao Caihuan, her imposing manner at this time made the latter shocked and scared. With her lips trembling, she gritted her teeth and confessed, "Fifth Sister, I am sorry. I want to marry Prince Chen... but it was not I who came out with the 'alcohol' idea. It was Zhao Xiran who abetted me to do that. And it seemed that the drink was drugged by others. Otherwise, the two princes wouldn't get drunk and fight against each other, even if they drank it all!"

With the instruction from Third Madam before, and coupled with Shao Wanru's warning just now, Shao Caihuan no longer dared to hide anything. Regardless of her shame, she told the truth.

"Our eldest sister-in-law?" Shao Wanru narrowed her eyes and looked at Shao Caihuan, who didn't understand her tone.

Thinking that Shao Wanru was not convinced, Shao Caihuan became anxious and explained again, "It's true. Do you remember on that day when Prince Chen come to our mansion, Old Madam of Minister Zhao's Mansion and Zhao Xiran were also here?"

Third Madam had made Shao Caihuan realize that she must have fallen into Zhao Xiran's trap. So she hated Zhao Xiran very much and of course, said everything relevant to Zhao. Afraid that Shao Wanru didn't believe her, she particularly pointed out the time and place that could be linked to her foe.

After Shao Caihuan finished her words, Shao Wanru pondered for a moment and nodded, indicating that to some extent she agreed with Shao Caihuan. The latter breathed a sigh of relief, but she became nervous again as soon as hearing Shao Wanru's next words.

"Third Sister, though I believe in you, others must think it as the plot of you or your mother. If they also know that your purpose was to seduce Prince Chen, I am afraid that no men will get married to you in the future, so will it happen to Fourth Sister. And your mother will suffer a lot from Grandma!" Shao Wanru said calmly.

On hearing her words, Shao Caihuan felt helpless and her face was as pale as snow. That was what she was most scared about and also the reason why she did not dare to accuse Zhao Xiran without evidence.

Zhao Xiran would not lose anything if she was accused, because every word she said to Shao Caihuan that night just sounded like advice. In addition, Shao Caihuan didn't want it public that she had a crush on her future brother-in-law!

She wouldn't tell even her biological grandma. She had always known her grandma would be partial to Shao Hua'an all the time.

Her mother might even be sent out to repent for the blame that she didn't teach her children well.

Shao Caihuan was not a scheming person and she had been in a panic at this time. She asked Shao Wanru for help with her hands and feet trembling, "Fifth Sister, what should we do now? What... what should we do?"

Her brain was blank now. She just wanted to get away from the trouble together with her parents and sister.

There was an old saying that to be in the king's company is tantamount to living with a tiger, and even in the company of a prince like Prince Chen was the same. Now Shao Caihuan would rather marry into an ordinary family to seek peace for a lifetime. Stuck in such a dilemma, she wanted no more dreamy happiness and love but harmony and peace.

"Third Sister, do you promise you did not instruct someone to drug the drink?" Shao Wanru asked. After all, it was true that the drink was mixed with something.

Shao Caihuan gave the order of serving the drink. But who gave the instruction of drugging it? Zhao Xiran? It seemed to be impossible. Even Zhao Xiran could arrange a few of her servants in the mansion, it was unlikely for her to plant an agent to drug the drink. Since Shao Caihuan did it with ulterior motives, the person who sent the drink was probably either her henchmen or Third Madam's.

And such a trustworthy henchman couldn't be bribed by Zhao Xiran.

"I promise I didn't do that, Fifth Sister! Although it's my wishful thinking, I didn't dare to put something harmful into the drink. It is known to everyone that Prince Chen is in poor health. If something terrible happened to him because of the drink with drugs, the whole Duke Xing's Mansion would be sentenced to death. No matter how much I love him, I was not daring to drug him!" Shao Caihuan wiped her tears and shook her head.

It was true that she was too timid to do such a thing. All she wanted was nothing but to help Prince Chen rest after he was drunk.

Then they would lie on the bed together with her clothes torn in pieces by herself, waiting to be caught by others.

As a matter of course, she would be taken as his woman. Since she would be just a co-consort, Shao Caihuan didn't mind at all that her reputation had been slightly damaged at that time. Anyway, Prince Chen was the descendant of the royal family.

As Shao Caihuan shook her head and denied it, Shao Wanru blinked her eyes, concealing the deep doubts in them. "It was firmly certain that the drink was drugged, which was based on Shao Caihuan's order. If it was not the person from our mansion, it could also be..."

"Help me, Fifth Sister! Tell Prince Chen about it. And I... I won't dare to do it again. I won't do it again!" Shao Caihuan pleaded.

"Third Sister, I don't know how the matter will be settled yet. I haven't gone out since I returned to Piaoyun Courtyard. I don't know what Grandma and Second Uncle think of it," Shao Wanru shook her head and said. She couldn't make the decision on how to deal with the matter. She was just the unmarried Fifth Miss of Duke Xing's Mansion who didn't have much power.

"Then... then what should I do? I... I didn't do it on purpose... and I didn't do anything else. Second Uncle plans to send all the servants to the palace to be interrogated by the Emperor. Fifth Sister, what should I do? What should I do?" said Shao Caihuan who looked at Shao Wanru with desperation.

"The Emperor will interrogate all the servants?" Shao Wanru was shocked.

"Yes, I heard that all of them will be sent to the imperial palace." Shao Caihuan said with tears. She was in a panic at the moment and only hoped that Shao Wanru could give her a hand.

"Third Sister, did you serve the drink with a proper reason? Are you sure that your service was reasonable in other's eyes?" Shao Wanru asked with a calm look.

"Yes, yes, of course! My mother asked a servant to send some good spirits to the three princes, and that was all they had known. Even if the drink sender was my mother's servant girl, she would just think that my mother wanted to please the princes," Shao Caihuan recalled her memory and illustrated with logic.

"If that was the case, Third Sister, you don't have to be worried. Anyway, you and Third Aunt didn't know that the drink was drugged. Third Aunt has just taken charge of the inner court, so some people may want to avenge the third branch for the former master!" Shao Wanru hinted to Shao Caihuan.

When it came to the so-called former master, most people would naturally think of Madam Jiang of the second branch. However, Madam Jiang was not in the mansion anymore, so it was less likely to be her. Was there anyone else of the second branch who could be regarded as the old master?

Who was it that wanted to seize control of the household?

But what confused Shao Wanru most now was the reason why Zhao Xiran, as a newly married woman, was so aggressive. Even if she wanted to seize power, it was not the right time to do it...

Was Zhao Xiran so eager to manage the inner court?

### **Chapter 857 A Life-and-Death Quarrel in the Bridal Room**

Shao Caihuan suddenly goggled at Shao Wanru. She moved her lips but said nothing. Her eyes flashed with a trace of resentment.

Neither Madam Jiang nor Shao Yanru was in the mansion. If there was someone else who could intervene in it, it could only be the bride who had just married into the mansion.



Most servants used to follow Madam Jiang of the second branch. Without her in the mansion, Zhao Xiran could be the first person whose orders they would obey. Thinking of this, Shao Caihuan suddenly felt regretful and furious. If Zhao Xiran hadn't abetted her, she would have never come up with such an idea.

Fortunately, Shao Caihuan was not hopelessly stupid. She was so furious now that her face turned pale.

"Third Sister, we have to put an end to this trouble. I'm afraid that they want to put the blame on your mother. If you want to save your family, you have to take action before a decree comes here from the palace!" Shao Wanru smiled slightly and said softly.

Shao Caihuan had seen what had happened in her grandma's room—her grandma and second uncle oppressed her mother. And it was she who had caused it. Thinking of it, she felt her heart was torn apart. She realized it was her fault, so she swore to stop her mother from being forced to be the scapegoat.

"Obviously, the second branch should be to blame. Why our third branch is taken as the cause?" Thinking that her mother's health was also harmed by her second aunt, Shao Caihuan felt a burning pain in her heart. Her mother once asked her to have an eye on the people of second branch and not to have too much contact with them because they were extremely shrewd.

But, how careless she was and deceived by Zhao Xiran!

The more she thought about it, the angrier she became. No matter how to suppress the anger, she couldn't just let it go. She gritted her teeth, turned around, and left. She didn't allow them to put the blame on her mother.

Even if she couldn't tell the truth, she could link it to Zhao Xiran. After all, it happened in Duke Xing's Mansion but not in Minister Zhao's Mansion. It was not that easy for Zhao Xiran to seize power here.

Seeing Shao Caihuan leave with a livid face, Yujie asked, "Miss, where is Third Miss going?"

Shao Wanru glanced through the window with cold eyes, watching Shao Caihuan walk away quickly, smiled silently, and said, "Some people always think that they are smart enough to get others wrapped around their fingers. But the 'others' are not as stupid as they thought. When a life-and-death struggle breaks out, they may not necessarily be ahead of the game!"

Her words were so vague that Yujie couldn't understand them. She blinked her eyes and decided to ask some less vague questions, "Is Third Miss going to make trouble with Second Young Madam?"

Shao Wanru nodded.

"But Third Miss has no evidence. Besides, I don't think Second Young Madam is so stupid and intends to hurt the two princes. It is a very serious crime to harm royal members!" Yujie muttered subconsciously.

"She didn't drug the drink!" Shao Wanru said lightly. But she had a name in her heart. "Although it hasn't been confirmed yet, I think it could be..."

However, though Zhao Xiran was not the "drug instructor", she stirred up trouble via giving the pastry recipe and abetting Shao Caihuan. "Since you have committed evil deeds, never hope to escape unharmed!" Shao Wanru thought.

There was no evidence to prove the crime committed by a newcomer who had just entered the mansion? Sometimes, evidence was not everything. And it was not so difficult to spread gossip among the crowd!

Shao Caihuan was a double-edged sword, especially when she still wanted to protect her third branch...

Zhao Xiran had sat on the bed and waited for Shao Hua'an for a long time. As he hasn't been back yet, she could not help frowning tightly and felt very uneasy.

"Miss, let me go and inquire about it!" Her servant girl Qiu Yue also felt anxious.

"No. we wait! We have just entered Duke Xing's Mansion. Don't act rashly!" Zhao Xiran shook her head and slowly relaxed her frowning eyebrows. She was just a bride. No matter what happened outside, it had nothing to do with her. Either it was related to the third branch or the second branch, in no way it would be linked to her, a newcomer of the mansion.

"Miss, shall I go to the door and have a look?" Another servant girl Qiu Lian suggested.

This time, Zhao Xi didn't refuse and nodded.

As soon as Qiu Lian walked to the door and went out, she saw Shao Caihuan rush into the room with anger. She stepped back and bowed to her, "Third Miss!"

Shao Caihuan came to make trouble. She pushed Qiu Lian away and strode in. The bead curtain hanging at the door was pulled off by her, the pearls on it falling to the ground one by one.

Zhao Xi stood up from the bed and looked at Shao Caihuan with a displeased face. But she kept her voice gentle, "Third Sister, what do you mean by this?"

"What do I mean? Sister Zhao, you are good at pretending to be a fool! No sooner had you entered the mansion today than you bribed Second Aunt's former henchmen and asked them to drug the drink that was served to the two princes, for the sake of trapping my mother and seizing her power of managing the mansion!" Shao Caihuan shouted with anger and trembled.

Actually, more than half parts of the words she just said were made up. But as she questioned Zhao Xiran with them, she started to think that they were just the truth. "Otherwise, Zhao Xiran would not have played a trick on me. She would benefit the most from the whole thing!"

"Third Sister, what are you talking about?" Zhao Xiran's face became gloomy and unfriendly.

"Don't you understand what I'm talking about? Don't you like to stir up trouble in secret? Everyone praises that you are more talented even than a man. I think you are indeed more talented than a man, in viciousness! I thought that Eldest Brother married a good woman, but the truth is you are not but a Second Aunt to me!"

Shao Caihuan was so angry that she pointed at Zhao Xiran and swore at her.

"Third Sister, I don't know what you are talking about, but it's inappropriate for you to disrespect your elders!" Zhao Xiran's face became colder and colder, but her words were very orderly. She didn't show her grievance, but only pointed out Shao Caihuan's disrespect to Madam Jiang.

“Don’t ever try to avoid my question with Second Aunt as an excuse. You don’t know what she has done to make herself end up like that. Don’t pretend to be kind! However, you seem to have a close relationship with her... Have you taken over all her former followers in the mansion? Are you ready to seize power to manage Duke Xing’s Mansion with their help?”

Shao Caihuan was not fooled at all and still questioned her with anger.

Shao Caihuan’s voice was angry and sharp, and all the servants in the courtyard heard her. Some of them had already noticed that something was wrong and went to report it to Old Madam, worried that something bad would happen in the bridal room.

“Third Sister, there is no need to slander our elders. Even if they were wrong, it was not what we juniors should talk about!” Zhao Xiran said coldly.

Shao Caihuan couldn’t outspoke Zhao Xiran, and she was further infuriated by the latter’s delicate and charming face. She waved her hand to slap her.

Zhao Xiran took a step back and avoided it.

Qiu Yue rushed forward to stop Shao Caihuan and said, “Third Miss, our Miss has just married into Duke Xing’s Mansion. Why are you being so rude to her? Is it because that you are discontent with her? If that’s the case, you can complain to Old Madam! Our Miss doesn’t have to marry First Young Master of your mansion!”

Indeed, it was Duke Xing’s Mansion who asked for this marriage for many years. It could be said that Zhao Xiran was a hard-worn daughter-in-law for whom Duke Xing’s Mansion had begged thousands of times. The servant of Minister Zhao’s Mansion had the confidence to say such words.

The failure to slap Zhao Xiran and the servant girl’s presuming words made Shao Caihuan so angry that her eyes widened and her face turned pale and livid.

Whether in arguments or other aspects, she couldn’t win Zhao Xiran, who took her down with just a few words.

She realized that even if she went on arguing with Zhao Xiran, she could not force her to confess and might make things even worse, which made her angrier. She reached out to pick up two red candles beside her and threw them to the ground with force.

Her mother, she, and even the entire third branch were about to be destroyed by Zhao Xiran. So how could Shao Caihuan have scruples at this time?

“Third Miss, how dare you...” Zhao Xiran was also shocked with her face turning livid. Even though she didn’t care too much about her marriage, she could not bear that Shao Caihuan smashed the red candles. That was extremely ominous for a marriage.

“And how dare you trick me? Zhao Xiran, did you want to hurt the two princes or our third branch? Just tell me what you want. There is no one else in this room. The people present are either your servant girls or mine. Neither of them could be valid witnesses to help you or me. Just tell me the truth!”

Shao Caihuan shouted in a sharp voice. And she stepped hard on the candles on the ground.

The brightly red candles with patterns of dragon and phoenix were broken, and the sparks were also put out.

In the bridal chamber, the candles could not be put out now.

The two servant girls of Zhao Xiran were so shocked that their faces became pale.

Zhao Xiran was so angry that her voice trembled, "Third Miss Shao, you... what do you want? Since I came and sat in this room, I have never stepped out of it. What did I do to make you so angry that you curse me here? Well, if you don't give me an explanation today, I'll go back to Minister Zhao's Mansion right away. As for my marriage, let's just call it off!"

No one could hold back their anger and say nothing when encountering such an insult just after entering the mansion. Zhao Xiran thought that she was a calm person, but now she was trembling with anger caused by Shao Caihuan's rudeness.

"The Miss of Duke Xing's Mansion is as unruly as it was said to be. How could she be so savage? I have never seen it before!"

"I don't mean anything special. I just want to know why you drug the two princes!" Said Shao Caihuan. After being defeated in the argument just now, she was smart at this time, no longer following to talk about the previous topic but mentioning the most serious problem.

"What are you talking about?" The half-closed door of the room was heavily pushed. Shao Caihuan and Zhao Xiran looked back together. When they saw the group of people at the door, they took a step back at the same time.

As was expected, such a big noise had alerted Old Madam.

Seeing the beads on the ground and the aggressive look on Shao Caihuan's face, Old Madam was so angry that her face turned pale...

### **Chapter 858 Duke's Mansion Was Demoted Into Marquis's Mansion**

"Has Third Miss been locked up?" It was already late when the news was sent to Piaoyun Courtyard. Shao Wanru had not deliberately asked someone to inquire about it, so she got the news much later.

"Yes, she was also locked up in the small Buddha Hall behind to accompany Second Miss. I heard that Old Madam also asked someone to beat Third Miss before locking her up. When Third Madam heard this, she went to beg Old Madam for leniency, but Old Madam refused. Later, Third Madam knelt in Old Madam's yard and she fainted soon."

Nanny Yu sorted out the news she had gotten and reported to Shao Wanru.

This matter had been blown up a little, so everyone in the mansion knew it. Although Old Madam had forbidden talking about this, it was so late that those who should know it had already known.

Even some guests who stayed in the front yard were talking about this.

The servants had stopped talking, but the guests could not be forbidden to discuss this. For a moment, rumors were spread everywhere. Nanny Yu merely went to the front yard just now.

She had not deliberately inquired about it. However, after listening aside for a while, she had already got the news she wanted.

"How about Third Uncle?" Shao Wanru asked calmly. She had looked down on her Third Uncle in the past. Be it Second Uncle's plot or not, since Third Uncle could force Second Uncle to compromise on Shao Jie'er's marriage, it meant that Third Uncle had something in his hand that Second Uncle was afraid of.

"Hearing that Third Madam fainted, Third Master took Third Madam back after making a scene. But Third Miss was still locked up!" Nanny Yu thought for a while and said.

"So who is hosting the banquet outside now?" Shao Wanru asked again.

"The Duke is hosting the banquet outside, while Old Madam inside, but..." Nanny Yu hesitated when saying this.

"What's wrong?" Shao Wanru raised her eyes to look at Nanny Yu and asked.

"I heard that the new Madam wants to go back to her mansion!" Nanny Yu had never heard of such a thing before that a new Madam still wanted to leave after the wedding ceremony. It was better not to tell this kind of thing to an unmarried Miss. However, after thinking twice, Nanny Yu still told the truth, because her Miss was not a common master.

"Has she gone back?" Shao Wanru was not surprised. Shao Caihuan made a scene in the bridal chamber and poured all the blame on Zhao Xiran. If Zhao Xiran reacted nothing and suppressed this matter with grievances, she would not be like the Zhao Xiran that Shao Wanru had imagined.

"Old Madam will definitely not let her leave. I heard that Old Madam asked someone to guard the bridal chamber," Nanny Yu said.

A glimmer of smile flashed through Shao Wanru's face. After all, this was Duke Xing's Mansion. It was impossible for Old Madam to let Duke Xing's Mansion have such a scandal. Even though there were rumors outside, it was still better than the situation that Zhao Xiran would really go back.

Old Madam always valued the interests of Duke Xing's Mansion more than anything else.

Maybe Zhao Xiran just wanted to show her grievance instead of really making trouble. However, in Old Madam's eyes, this was like adding fuel to the fire. Even though she used to like Zhao Xiran very much, she would definitely change her mind this time.

"Is there any news from the palace?" After asking about things in the mansion, Shao Wanru asked again.

"I haven't..." Nanny Yu was about to say that she hadn't heard about it, but she suddenly saw Qu Le coming in hurriedly.

"Miss, Old Madam invites you to go out together. She said that there comes an imperial edict!" Qu Le wiped away the sweat and said in a hurry.

Shao Wanru nodded, stood up, and walked out with Qu Le. Considering the time, the imperial edict should be issued now, since it was impossible to be delayed to tomorrow.

After such a big matter had happened, if the palace had not reacted yet, it would be too slow.

In the hall, several masters of Duke Xing's Mansion had all arrived. Even Shao Caihuan, who had just been beaten and locked up in the Buddha Hall, and Zhao Xiran, who was locked up in the bridal chamber, were both there.

Shao Wanru came quite early, and Third Madam was the last to arrive. Third Madam looked so pale and bloodless that she was about to fall. Holding Shao Cailing's hand and Third Master of Duke Xing's Mansion, she still staggered with every step. It could be seen that she was not in a good condition.

Seeing that everyone was here, the eunuch who delivered the imperial edict started to read the Emperor's edict.

It said that the two princes had drunk drugged wine, so that the two princes lost their manners. Emperor asked Duke Xing's Mansion to find out who did this, and severely rebuked Duke Xing and Old Madam for not being able to manage their own mansions well. A year's salary of Duke Xing's Mansion was deducted, and Duke Xing's Mansion was demoted to Marquis Xing's Mansion.

Hearing the decree, Old Madam went limp and fell to the ground. She showed the whites of her eyes and fainted directly.

Third Madam struggled to support Old Madam, but even she was dragged to the ground by Old Madam.

Shao Jing stared blankly and he knew that this matter would not be settled peacefully. Either of the two princes was the favorite prince of Emperor. According to Emperor's intention, if nothing went wrong, one of them would become the future Emperor. But anyway, he had not expected that Emperor would directly strip the title of Duke Xing's Mansion.

Changing the title of Duke to that of Marquis could only happen to the mansion that had committed a serious crime. Of course, it also meant that Duke Xing's Mansion was not favored by Emperor now.

Among the aristocratic families in the capital city, Duke Xing's Mansion had always been famous for being beloved by Emperor. Previously, Old Duke Xing and the former Heir of Duke Xing had both been favored by Emperor, and Duke Xing's Mansion had always been flourishing. According to this trend, everyone knew that Duke Xing's Mansion was very prosperous.

"Duke Xing... Oh, no, Marquis Xing, please accept the imperial edict!" After reading the imperial edict, the eunuch deliberately said in a loud and high-pitched voice. In Shao Jing's ears, this voice was almost full of sarcasm.

"Yes, Your Majesty!" He lowered his head, forced himself to clear up the tremble in his heart, and said respectfully.

"Marquis, what's going on in your mansion? Several princes came to congratulate the wedding, but such a thing happened. It's really..." The eunuch shook his head with a speechless look.

This matter indeed made people speechless. Other people had all been fine, but it was the two princes that had been in trouble, and they had even lost their manners to fight with each other. Even if nothing could be found out now, this matter had something to do with Duke Xing's Mansion. However, directly demoting the title of Duke as a punishment was still too heavy.

However, discerning people also knew that now Duke Xing's Mansion was less and less valued by Emperor. There had been a matter that First Miss of Duke Xing's Mansion had had an accident in the palace before, and there were rumours that it had caused a fight between the two princes. Was this the continuation of what had happened at that time?

If it was true, Marquis Xing should indeed be punished for making the two princes lose the face of the whole royal family again and again. From this point of view, Emperor's punishment was not too much, because the royal family's face could not be slapped by anyone at will.

"Eunuch, may I ask you... how should we deal with this matter next?" Shao Jing pulled out the jade pendant hanging on his waist, sent it to the eunuch who delivered the imperial edict, and said with a smile.

Actually, this matter had not been over yet.

"Marquis Xing, I really don't know about this matter. But... several princes almost got hurt this time, so Empress Dowager and Empress are very angry."

The eunuch took the jade pendant, and the smile on his face became more sincere, bright like a flower.

"Eunuch, what do you mean?" Seeing that the eunuch was quite easy to speak with, Shao Jing pulled him aside to talk more. He was still in a daze now.

"There must be an explanation for this matter," the eunuch said with a smile.

"Please tell me about it!" Shao Jing asked in a low voice without looking at the women members of Marquis Xing's Mansion, who were in a mess on the side.

"After all, it happened in your mansion..." The eunuch rolled his eyes and said meaningfully. It was inappropriate for him to make some things too clear, "Emperor is very angry and he is still investigating this matter."

"Eunuch, our mansion has detained all the servants who had delivered the wine and dishes at that time. Eunuch, may I bother you to take them to the palace, please? No matter who committed a crime, I will never cover it up. Now all the people that had touched dishes are here. None of them is missing or in trouble!" Shao Jing handed over another banknote.

This was the way to show his innocence. With no one missing, he sent all of them to the palace and had never interrogated them before. Doing in this way meant that he had a clear conscience and had not doctored any evidence. He hoped that Emperor might understand his innocence and intention.

The eunuch understood what he meant. Besides, he also came here today to take those people away. Even if Marquis Xing wanted to interrogate servants by himself, Emperor would not agree.

Marquis Xing's action was quite smart, so the eunuch smiled more brightly now. He nodded repeatedly and skillfully slid the banknotes into his sleeves. The eunuch raised his voice and said, "Okay, Marquis, I will take these people away for you!"

He waved his hand, and then several guards came in from outside the hall.

Shao Jing hurriedly asked his servant to lead these guards to take those people away. They had been locked up separately.

The eunuch watched the guards take them away with a smile and then took leave of Shao Jing. His attitude was much friendlier than before when he had just come here. It could be seen that Shao Jing was really innocent this time. He didn't know whether the people in Duke Xing's Mansion had done something wrong or someone else had intervened in it. This original Duke could only accept his bad luck.

Shao Wanru watched the farce with an extremely calm. She also saw the servants holding Old Madam and shouting in panic one after another, as if Old Madam was really going to die.

In addition to Old Madam's servant girls and old maids, there were also Third Madam's servant girls and old maids. They showed no weakness, and kept shouting "Third Madam, wake up". For a time, the hall was full of crying and shouting. The women members staggered, as if the whole Duke Xing's Mansion had been searched.

Shao Wanru closed her eyes slightly, with her long eyelashes fluttering together, and then her head tilted to Qu Le's shoulder.

"Miss, Fifth Miss..." Qu Le understood and hurriedly shouted, looking anxious and flustered as if she was frightened to be at a loss.

Old Madam and Third Madam had been in a coma for a while, so the crying of the servants of the two sides almost got lower now. Qu Le's cry shocked all the other people.

Of course, the most important thing was that Shao Wanru had a different identity now. If she was just an ordinary Miss of Marquis Xing's Mansion, no one would pay attention to her at this time.

"What happened?" Shao Jing had just sent the eunuch away. Hearing this, he hurriedly came over and asked.

"Our Miss was fine just now, but she suddenly passed out!" Qu Le said with anxiety all over her pale face.

"Why did she pass out suddenly?" Shao Jing suspiciously looked at Shao Wanru, who lowered her face. If she had also fainted because of shock like Old Madam, she might have passed out a long time ago. But she reacted too slowly!

### **Chapter 859 A Scheming Bride**

"I don't know. My master has always been fine, but... but suddenly..." Qu Le patted Shao Wanru on her back and sobbed in a low voice.

"Does your master have any... unmentionable disease?" Shao Jing asked impatiently.

At this time, his mind was full of thoughts and he didn't want to hear the crying in the living room at all. He felt annoyed. In order to prove his innocence, he sent all the servants to the palace. But he had no confidence. He could guarantee that he was not linked to the drug matter, but he could not assure the eunuch that other masters in his mansion were all innocent.



"No, my Miss doesn't have any unmentionable disease. She was just in weak health. When she lived in Yuhui Nunnery, she needed to recuperate from time to time," Qu Le said with a grievance, wiping the tears on her face with a handkerchief.

"Help your Miss to have a rest!" Shao Jing waved his hand with impatience, turned around, and was about to stride away. He didn't want to deal with the affairs of the inner court anymore.

What happened today was so unexpected that he could not get it over in a moment, and he was not in the mood to care about these fainted women.

"Father!" Said Shao Hua'an.

"Come with me!" Ordered Shao Jing.

"Father, I..." Shao Hua'an looked at Zhao Xiran beside him. In fact, he was going to tell Shao Jing that he wanted to accompany Zhao Xiran to leave first.

Shao Jing followed Shao Hua'an's eyesight and cast a glance at Zhao Xiran, who was standing beside with her eyes half-closed. He ignored his son's plea and said unhappily with his eyebrows frowning, "Come with me first!" Then he turned around and strode away. Shao Caihuan was wrong, but she would not have been so out of mind if it had nothing to do with Zhao Xiran.

He couldn't find out anything now. But generally speaking, something could be wrong with the new daughter-in-law. If it was related to Minister Zhao's Mansion, it was such a misfortune for his son to get married to Zhao Xiran.

His wife, Madam Jiang was the one who wanted the most to build a marital relationship with Minister Zhao's Mansion. They had thought that this daughter-in-law was a reliable person, but she turned out to be a scheming one. If it weren't for the fact that she had already married into Marquis Xing's Mansion, Shao Jing would have intended to cancel the engagement. And he couldn't bear to see that his son should want to be clingy to his wife at this time.

"Yes!" Shao Hua'an didn't dare to disobey Shao Jing. He could do nothing but leave together with his father.

"Miss!" Zhao Xiran's servant girl gently called.

Zhao Xiran had calmed down now. She was standing alone in red clothes, looking a little tragic.

Zhao Xiran looked up at Shao Hua'an's leaving figure and then turned her look at the messy hall. She walked to Old Madam.

Most of the people who stayed were of the third branch, and they all went to look after Third Madam. But no masters were standing behind to support Old Madam, so she seemed to be at a disadvantage.

As soon as Zhao Xiran walked over, the servants immediately made their way for her.

Zhao Xiran walked to Old Madam and took her from Nanny Yu's hands. after looking at Old Madam's pale face, she reached out to hold Old Madam's dropped hand and pressed it hard in the place between the thumb and the index finger. Old Madam screamed in a low voice and woke up.

“Old Madam!” Zhao Xiran looked at her with tears in her eyes and called her softly. Although her eyes were full of aggrievance, she looked peaceful and showed no intention of making trouble.

That comforted Old Madam who had just woken up. She felt better and gradually came to her senses.

However, the scared voices of the servant girls and old maids came in her ears, mixed with the cries of Shao Caihuan and Shao Cailing. Old Madam immediately recalled the situation just now, which made her so angry that her eyes widened. With the help of Nanny Yu and Zhao Xiran, she stood up, looked at the chaotic hall, and then shouted in fury, “Shut up!”

On hearing Old Madam’s rebuke, the servants of the third branch immediately stopped making a sound.

“Mother!” Third Master said unhappily, wanting to warn her that Third Madam was still unconscious.

“Get out of here and stop making trouble anymore! If it weren’t for them, such a thing wouldn’t have happened to us all!” Old Madam pointed at the people of the third branch with disgust, including Third Madam, Shao Caihuan, and Shao Cailing.

“Mother, how can you...” Third Master didn’t agree with his mother.

“Get out of here! Are you going to wait to collect someone’s dead body?” Old Madam was in fury at this time, and she said without hesitation, “If the Emperor finds out that the drug case has something to do with them, you can’t get away from it either.”

Thinking of the servants taken away by the guards just now, Third Master was also frightened. Although he was not a promising man, he had a post. If he was implicated, he would not only lose his job but also lose his life.

“Go! Go! Everyone goes back to your own courtyard!” Third master was no longer in the mood to comfort his wife. He waved his hand and expelled the people of his branch with anger.

As a group of people helped Third Madam to leave, Third Master also followed them and left.

Shao Wanru also woke up. She stood aside with Qu Le’s help and looked around the messy room quietly. She also saw Third Madam’s slightly trembling eyelids. Obviously, Third Madam had come to her senses, but she didn’t wake up to avoid her responsibility.

Old Madam did hate Third Madam to the extreme because of the matter.

“Grandmother!” Zhao Xiran said after most of the people had left the hall.

Old Madam looked her up and down. Since her manner was quite gentle, Old Madam snorted and questioned with arrogance, “Does your Minister Zhao’s Mansion have anything to do with what happened today?”

Her favorite granddaughter Shao Yanru was as obedient as Zhao Xiran was now. Old Madam liked that anyway. But she got irritated as long as she thought that her beloved granddaughter ended up like that after she entered the palace. Now when she saw Zhao Xiran’s similar gentleness, she felt that the woman must have ulterior motives so her attitude to Zhao was extremely unpleasant.

Zhao Xiran, as a newcomer, couldn't stand the sharpness of Old Madam's words. She cried immediately and then said with tears in her eyes, "Old Madam, my family could not do such things. If you don't believe me, you can send someone to investigate it!"

Investigate Minister Zhao's Mansion? At this time? Old Madam snorted in her heart and became more and more unhappy. "You'd better tell the truth. The Emperor has taken our servants away, so what will happen next is not up to us anymore!"

The sarcasm in her words was apparent. Zhao Xiran's face turned red. She had no choice but saw Old Madam leave with shame and guilt.

After calming down, Zhao Xiran turned to look at Shao Wanru, who was the only one still present. "Fifth Sister..."

"Sister Zhao, I don't feel well, so I couldn't stay here with you anymore!" Shao Wanru said faintly. She did not look energetic at all. After seeing what had happened to the mansion today and the disturbance just now, no one would be in a good mood, so it was reasonable for Shao Wanru to say that.

After bowing to Zhao Xiran, Shao Wanru staggered to leave with her holding Qu Le's shoulder. Before she figured out Zhao Xiran's purpose, she would never get too close to her.

No matter it was Zhao Xiran or Minister Zhao behind her who was the head plotter, what happened today was blamed on Zhao Xiran for the time being.

Anyway, Zhao Xiran must have something to do with it. She didn't look like an ordinary bride. And she was not as popular as imagined after marrying into Marquis Xing's Mansion, whose people even felt that it was not happy of her to marry to their mansion.

As for causing trouble, she must have ever done that.

However, it was confusing why she hastened to marry into Marquis Xing's Mansion if she didn't like her marital relationship with it? What was more, she looked like a warm person who was very worried about the mansion. Shao Wanru was going to get married in a month. If there was a decent person in charge of the affairs, it would be much better. And Zhao Xiran, who had just married into Marquis Xing's Mansion, would inevitably take over the position. After all, Old Madam had never liked Third Madam. As for the fact that the last manager was Third Madam, it was because Old Madam had no other choices at that time.

Then there was a new question for Shao Wanru. Why did Zhao Xiran agree to marry in such a hurry? The management of the inner court would always be passed on to her! Was she in a hurry to gain power?

The people of Marquis Xing's Mansion left one by one, leaving Zhao Xiran and her two servant girls, and none of them stayed to lead her, which made the two servant girls very angry.

"Miss, they have gone too far. After all, today is your wedding day," Qiu Yue said angrily.

Qiu Lian was also very angry. She stared at Shao Wanru's back and said with hatred, "Everyone said that Fifth Miss Shao has a good character that even the Emperor once praised her. Now, look at what she has done to you, Miss. How dare she leave you here alone!"

The more the two servant girls thought about it, the angrier they became. When their Miss was still in Minister Zhao's Mansion, she had been always the apple of Minister Zhao's and Old Madam Zhao's eyes since she was born. Why did the people of Marquis Xing's Mansion look down on her?

What had happened today had nothing to do with their Miss, because she stayed in her bridal chamber all the time. How unreasonable the people of Marquis Xing's Mansion were!

"Miss..." Qiu Yue still wanted to say something, but Zhao Xiran waved her hand to stop her, "Don't talk nonsense. Fifth Sister is the future Princess Chen. How can we speak ill of her at will? Let's go!"

As she said that, she walked out calmly as if the grievance in the bottom of her heart had gone. She had suffered so much on her wedding day, but she didn't have any complaints. She did have the demeanor of a master.

Since their Miss did not complain, the two servant girls could only hold back their anger and followed Zhao Xiran to the bridal chamber with stiff faces. Fortunately, they had come to the courtyard where the bridal chamber was located several times before to send decorations. Now they could find the place without the guidance of people in Marquis Xing's Mansion.

After they left, Shao Wanru showed up from the shadow in the corner. She looked at Zhao Xiran's back thoughtfully and had to think highly of her, because she could even remain calm and cautious without someone else around.

Almost all the elders did not like her after she married into the family, and the quarrel between the second branch and the third branch was blamed on her, which even led to the Emperor's intervention. Any other woman would either be in a panic or cry in despair if they came across such things, but Zhao Xiran was still so calm!

"Go and figure out whether her two servant girls have done anything special since they entered the mansion today or whether they have met someone in our mansion and talked in private," Shao Wanru said gently.

It seemed that Zhao Xiran might not be directly relevant to this matter. Then, it could be her servant girls.

Shao Wanru expected to dig out what was the plot of this new sister-in-law and why she was so calm...

### **Chapter 860 Who Can Have the Token?**

Zhao Xiran's wedding night was destined to be a sleepless night because of the victimhood of the two princes.

It was not until dawn that Shao Hua'an came back to the bridal room with an exhausted body. He had discussed with Shao Jing in the study until now. When he returned to the room, he saw Zhao Xiran sitting on the bedside, and felt very guilty.

"I'm sorry, Xiran. I was occupied. Why didn't you sleep? I have sent someone to tell you to go to bed first!"

Though Shao Hua'an was busy, he still cared for Zhao Xiran and asked his servant to deliver his message to her.

"It's fine. I'm not sleepy," Zhao Xiran said softly with a gentle smile on her face, but the smile looked very reluctant. It could be seen that she was also very tired.

Shao Hua'an couldn't help feeling distressed. He looked up through the window, held Zhao Xiran's hands, and said, "It's still early. Let's take a short nap before going to meet our relatives!"

Zhao Xiran nodded gently and helped Shao Hua'an take off the outer garment. They lay down and rested for about two hours before getting up.

After the couple was well cleaned and dressed, they went to the flower hall, the living room of the main house, only to see Shao Jing, Third Master, and Sisters there. Both Old Madam and Third Madam were unable to attend the meeting because of heavy sickness.

Although the gathering was just a ceremony, it was important for a newcomer to be recognized by her husband's family. If Old Madam refused to come with the excuse of having an illness, it would be a heavy slap in the face of the bride. It even made people feel that Old Madam did not intend to accept her.

Any bride would feel grieved when the elders of the mansion into which she had just married didn't even show up to recognize her, not to mention that last night she spent her wedding night alone.

Shao Hua'an looked at his wife with a gentle look and reached out to comfort her silently. He was full of guilty when facing Zhao Xiran.

Zhao Xiran raised her head and looked at Shao Hua'an with a sweet smile, which was with a little grievance but no resentment, which softened his heart. He couldn't help complaining. Xiran had nothing to do with that event. Why did his grandmother and father insist that it was caused by Minister Zhao's Mansion? The Zhaos were his in-laws and they could not want him to suffer a loss!

Though he had explained to his father with the same words again and again last night, his father didn't believe it. And it made Shao Hua'an feel a serious headache.

He was fond of Zhao Xiran, and he fell in love with her at first glance. They had gone through many challenges for a long time, and now he finally got the beauty he wanted. But unexpectedly they encountered so many difficulties on their wedding day.

He couldn't believe that his beloved woman was suspected by his father and grandmother! She suffered so much but never complained to him. And she even comforted him that she was fine.

How could she be fine with the problem deteriorating!

Shao Hua'an thought to himself that no matter how the elders in the mansion treated Zhao Xiran, he would protect her and never let her suffer too much grievance.

Old Madam and Third Madam didn't attend the meeting. Duke Xing's Mansion was degraded to be Marquis Xing's Mansion because of what had happened last night, for which everyone was very unhappy. Therefore, the recognition ceremony, which should have been joyful, was very silent and solemn. No one was in the mood to show a smile. Not to mention Shao Jing's gloomy look, even the unmarried Misses showed no smile on their faces.

When they received the gifts from Zhao Xiran, they bent their knees to show their gratitude and stepped aside.

Nanny Yu appeared at the door. She came in, handed a token to Shao Jing, and said, "Marquis Xing, Old Madam asked me to send this token to you. Please let the new Young Madam manage the household. Third Madam in poor health can't do it anymore!"

There was no other choice. It was known that Third Madam was the previous provisional manager of the affairs in the inner court. But now she didn't want to take charge of it anymore after they suffered such a disaster. So by now, there was no official controller for domestic affairs in the mansion. The next project they were going to do was Shao Wanru's wedding, and no mistakes were allowed to be made anymore. To be concluded, an official controller was in urgent need.

At first, they had intended to ask Zhao Xiran to help Third Madam with the management of the mansion first after she married. With her help, it would be easier for Third Madam. And she could also learn how to take care of the household. But now, The token was directly sent to Zhao Xiran, which meant that she had to take over it right now.

"Father, Third Aunt has always been the manager. It's not appropriate to ask Xiran to take over the position at once! She has just entered the mansion and doesn't know much about it!" Shao Hua'an took a step forward and refused.

"Except your wife, the qualified Madams in the mansion are either ill or hurt. Who else is more suitable than her?" Shao Jing said with impatience. The smile on his round face had suddenly gone. He turned a little gloomier when he looked at the person, and no longer smiled gently at others as he did before.

"Father..." Shao Hua'an still wanted to argue, but Shao Jing had already stood up and strode out. If it weren't for the meeting, he would have been out and inquired about the news now.

Third Master Shao also left as soon as Shao Jing did.

The flower hall became quiet in an atmosphere of weirdness. There should have been a lot of relatives. At least, the elders who were relatively close to the Shao family should have come. But few of them had come. Except for Shao Jing and Third Master Shao, Shao Hua'an and his wife were the oldest among the people present.

"Third Sister," Zhao Xiran broke the weird silence. She walked to Shao Caihuan, smiled at her, and said softly, "Third Sister, how is Third Aunt? What can I do for you? Just tell me if you need my help. Although I don't know how to be a good manager yet, I promise I will handle it well!"

Shao Caihuan's face was very gloomy. She raised her head to look at Zhao Xiran with very cold eyes. She had no reaction to Zhao Xiran's goodwill. Last night, she made a mess in the wedding room and was punished for it. After the meeting, she was going to be locked up in the Buddha hall.

"Thank you, Sister Zhao!" Seeing that Shao Caihuan kept silent with a cold face, Shao Cailing cut in and answered. She did not know what had happened yesterday, but she thought that her elder sister must be out of mind and had done such a thing. She felt guilty.

"You're welcome. We are families now." Zhao Xiran smiled. And then she cast a look at Shao Wanru, who was standing on the edge. "Fifth Sister, it will be a very busy month. If I do something wrong, please forgive me!"

After saying that, she curtsied to Shao Wanru. But the latter stepped aside to avoid the former's courtesy, and then she raised her watery eyes and said with a smile, "You are too polite, Sister Zhao!"

She said those words in a very distant tone, without any intention of building a close relationship with Zhao Xiran.

Zhao Xiran did not take her indifference seriously. She still looked at her with a smile and said, "Fifth Sister, if you need anything, you must tell me! Otherwise, I can't know what you need. Third Aunt is in poor health, so I will take care of the inner court for her for a while. Please don't be angry with me if I don't do a good job, sisters! I promise I will try my best to do it well!"

She glanced around the three sisters and talked in an increasingly gentle and decent way.

In Shao Huan'an's eyes, his wife was so generous that she took over the mess of affairs without any complaint. So he felt distressed, sad, and even annoyed. Then he glared at Shao Caihuan and frowned.

When it came to the reason why everyone was dissatisfied with Zhao Xiran, it was that Shao Caihuan broke into the bridal room and made it seem as if Zhao Xiran was the culprit.

Hearing Zhao Xiran's words, Shao Wanru and other sisters bowed sideways to her to show that they had understood her words.

"If you have nothing else to say, I beg your pardon that I must leave. Grandmother had grounded me to stay in the Buddha Hall!" Shao Caihuan was the first to turn around and leave. She didn't want to see Zhao Xiran one more second. The longer she saw Zhao, the more indignant she felt. Especially in the current situation, Shao Caihuan increasingly felt that Zhao Xiran was a sinister person and didn't want to stay with her at all.

"Third Sister, I'll go with you!" Although Shao Cailing felt that Zhao Xiran was innocent, Shao Caihuan was her biological sister after all, so she naturally followed Shao Caihuan.

"I didn't sleep well last night, so I'll go back too!" Shao Wanru said with a slight smile.

Since everyone was leaving, there was no reason to ask them to stay. Everyone left and Shao Wanru went back to Piaoyun Courtyard.

"Miss, does Third Madam really give up?" Yujie looked back at the flower hall behind her and asked with curiosity.

Shao Wanru shook her head and said with a slight smile, "Third Madam won't give up!"

The third branch hadn't been valued all the time. Her third uncle's job was just an idle post and he always had little money. Now that her two daughters had grown up, Third Madam must want to save up more money. She couldn't manage the family before, but later when she could, she would never forget that she could benefit a lot from her position as the manager. So by no means would she give up.

It was just a trick to trap Zhao Xiran that Third Madam threw the power to her.

Moreover, even if it was not for money, Third Madam would not let Zhao Xiran go either. Others might not know who had made the trouble on the wedding day, the first day Zhao Xiran entered the mansion, but Third Madam knew the truth that it was caused by Zhao's instigation to her daughter. Otherwise, such big chaos wouldn't happen.

However, she couldn't say it out. All she could do was to keep it in her heart.

Nevertheless, when they lose in hake they will have in herring. Third Madam could not give up avenging herself on Zhao Xiran.

"What about Old Madam, Miss?" Yujie thought and asked again. She was worried about something else. "Third Madam was responsible for preparing your dowries before, but it will be Eldest Young Madam who is in charge of it. How can she do it well? What does Old Madam mean to give the token to Eldest Young Madam?"

The preparation for Shao Wanru's dowries was very complex work. Even though Third Madam was very familiar with it, it was still a troublesome thing for her, let alone Zhao Xiran, who had just entered the mansion. Yujie didn't trust her at all.

"There is no need to worry about that," Shao Wanru said lightly. She was not worried about it, because her marriage was related to the royal family. Both Third Madam and Old Madam dare not neglect her. Moreover, after such a thing happened and caused the demotion of the title of nobility by one level, which was also a strong warning, Marquis Xing's Mansion did not dare to offend the royal family anymore.

Lots of people in the mansion would understand it. And Zhao Xiran was a smart person!

"Did you hear anything useful yesterday?" She asked casually.